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*The Unprofitableness of External,  
without Internal Religion.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preached before the

K I N G,

A T

St. J A M E S's,

January the 1<sup>st</sup>, 17<sup>15</sup><sub>16</sub>.

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*the Epistle of St. Paul to the ROMANS,  
Chap. ii. Verses 28, 29.*

*is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ;  
neither is that Circumcision, which is out-  
ward in the Flesh : But he is a Jew,  
which is one inwardly ; and Circumcision  
is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and  
not in the Letter, whose Praise is not of  
Men, but of God.*

**T** H E S E Words conclude the second Lesson for this Morning's Service, and were design'd by the Apostle to convince the Jews of a dangerous Mistake which they had entertain'd concerning the Observation of the *Mosaical* Law, and particularly the Rite of Circumcision. They vainly imagin'd, that no man could be accepted of God, unless he were either a natural Jew, and train'd up in the Profession of the Law of *Moses* ; or became a Professee to their Religion : But that being a Jew, or a Profelyte, especially such a Profelyte as submitted to Circumcision, was abundantly sufficient to recom-

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commend a Man to the Divine Favour. St. Paul, in his Opposition to this their Error, lets them know, that since the Publication of the Gospel, a Gentile who should heartily embrace it, would be accepted of God, without being circumcised, or submitting to the Law of Moses; and that a Jew, neglecting the Gospel, would be incapable of the Divine Acceptance: Nay farther, that even before the Gospel was published, it was not enough to have been of the Stock of Abraham, to have been circumcised, and trained up in the Law of Moses, unless they had lived according to the Precepts of that Law, particularly its moral Precepts, approving themselves upright in the Sight of God: and after all, not pretending to hope for his Favour from any Merit of their own, but through the

Grace and Mercy of God toward them  
— Ver. 17, *Behold, says he, thou art called a Jew, and restand in the Law, and makest thy*

*Boast of God, and knowest his Will, &c. Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that makest thy Boast of the Law through breaking the Law, dishonourest thou God.*

Upon this he proceeds to shew, that  
— Ver. 25, Circumcision then only profited when  
26, 27. *they kept the Law: And on the contrary, that an uncircumcised Person, who kept the Righteousness of the Law, particularly one who from among the Gentiles embraced the Faith of Christ, and was thereby brought to Christian Temper and Practice, would rise up in Judgment against an immoral Jew, and would be accepted of God, while such a Jew would*



utterly rejected by him; concluding in the Words of my Text, *For he is not a Jew, &c.* — *Ver. 28, 29.*

*He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; that is, He is not such a Person as God expects a Jew should be, who is so only by his Descent from Abraham, and by his Professing the Religion of the Jews: Neither is that Circumcision, which is outward in the Flesh; that is, This is not the thing which God principally design'd by Circumcision; it is not that sort of Circumcision which he expects, if it be no more than in the Flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; The Man whom God approves, and of which sort he design'd the Jews should all have been, is he, who is of the Temper and Spirit which the Law of God, particularly the Moral Part of it, requires him to be, one who inwardly believes in, reverences, and loves Almighty God: And Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter; The Circumcision which God approves, and of which the other is but a Figure, is, when the Heart is purified from all evil and corrupt Affections, when the Mind of the Man is renewed by the Grace and Spirit of God; not when he is merely circumcised according to the Letter of Moses's Law; whose Praise is not of Men, but of God.* This seems an Allusion to the Word *Judah*, from whence the Word *Jew* is derived, which denotes Praise, according to that Expression of *Jacob* in blessing his Sons, *Judah, thou art he whom thy Brethren shall praise; and* it is as if the Apostle had said, The

*Gen. xlix. 8.*

*Jew*

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Jew whom God accepts, is one who doth not only recommend himself to Men, by his outward Profession; but to God, who seeth his Heart, by the inward Frame and Temper of his Mind; and will therefore have Praise of God, whatsoever the Opinion of Men may be concerning him.

From the Words thus explain'd, I deduce this *Proposition*, as the Subject of my farther Discourse, namely, *That the Principle of that Religion which God approves, and which will, thro' his Mercy in Jesus Christ, render any Man acceptable to him, is in the Heart and Spirit of a Man, form'd and fix'd there by the Grace of the Divine Spirit; and that without this, God will accept no Man, upon account of any external Privileges, Advantages or Professions whatsoever.*

I lay down this *Proposition* in these General Terms; because, what the Apostle here speaks of a Jew, may be with equal Truth pronounced of a Christian; He is not a Christian, which is one outwardly; neither is that Baptism, which is merely external: But he is a Christian, who is one inwardly; and Baptism is that, not of Water only, but of Water and of the Spirit, according to the Declaration of St. Peter, *Baptism doth now save us; not the putting away the Filth of the Flesh; but the answer of a good Conscience towards God.*

And indeed, the Reason upon which the Apostle proceeds, and the Manner of his arguing with the Jews, evidently shew his Meaning to have been

to assert this as an undoubted Truth, That whatever external Advantages or Privileges God had bestowed, or should from time to time confer upon any one Nation, or any one Person more than another; or whatsoever Profession such Nation or Person should make; yet still that which render'd any Man capable of the Mercy and Favour of God, is something within him, rooted in his Heart and Spirit.

In my farther prosecuting this Argument, I propose the following Method.

*First*, To enquire what that Principle within Man is, which renders him capable of God's acceptance.

*Secondly*, To confirm the Truth of the Proposition, shewing, that this is primarily acceptable to God; and that without it, all external Privileges and Professions avail nothing to this purpose.

*Thirdly*, To shew what is the real Benefit of any External Privileges, such as being born a Jew, circumcised, or any thing which answers to these among Christians.

*Fourthly*, To draw some Inferences, by way of application.

*First*, I am to enquire what the Principle within a Man is, which renders him capable of God's acceptance.

It is express'd in my Text, by being *a Jew inwardly*; and by *the Circumcision of the Heart, the Spirit, and not in the Letter*. A Jew was he who outwardly profess'd to believe in the True God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth;

to



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to worship him only, and to be govern'd by his Law. And consequently he was a Jew inwardly, who had an internal Sense agreeable to this external Profession; one who had worthy Apprehensions of the Divine Majesty and suitable Affections of Mind towards him; one who worship'd him in Spirit and in Truth with all the Faculties of his Soul; and one who had heartily devoted himself to him, desiring above all things to know his Will, and being fully determin'd, by his Assistance, to act accordingly. Circumcision in the Flesh was a Figure of this in the Heart; and what that is, we are inform'd in diverse Passages of holy Writ. *Moses*, in his Exhortation to the People, a little before his Death

thus addresses himself to them; *Deut. x. 12.* *Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his Ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul?* adding a little after, *Circumcise therefore the Foreskin of your*

*—Ver. 16.* *Heart, and be no more stiff-necked.*

And again, where he makes mention of the Lord's circumcising their Hearts, *Deut. xxx. 6.* *and the Heart of their Seed;*

explains himself by adding *to love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart and with all thy Soul.* This it seems was the Circumcision of the Heart to be no more stiff-necked, but to fear, and love, and serve the Lord with all the Powers of the Soul. In like manner *St. Paul*, writing to the *Colossians*



*Colossians*, mentions the Circumcision of Christ, which he explains by the *Col. ii. 10, 11.* cutting off the Body of the Sins of the Flesh; when Christians at their Baptism undertook to mortify all their corrupt and vicious Inclinations and Passions, which he styles *the Circumcision made without Hands*; not made in the Flesh by the Hands of Men; but in the Soul, by the Operation of the divine Spirit.

For the setting this Matter in a clear Light, it to be observ'd, That in this degenerate Estate of Mankind, as we descend from the first Adam, we have no other Nature or Principle in us but that we derive from him, the Image of God, which he first formed Man, appears to be greatly defaced. We are strongly inclined to the things of Sense, and of this present Life; and we grow into an inordinate Esteem of the Enjoyments of this World, the Pleasures of Sense, the Possession of this World's Goods, the Grandeur of human Life; these are the things which we are prone to love, to desire and pursue, in the first and chief place. 'Tis true, we have rational Souls within us, and the Faculties of these Souls, as we grow in Years, are still more and more excited: But nevertheless, they are apt to be chiefly employed in surveying for the Body, and the temporal Concomitants of this present State, until a more spiritual and divine Principle be awaken'd in us, till we be excited in our Minds by the Divine Spirit to a Sense of Almighty God, and of a future State of Life, infinitely more considerable than that in which we are at present.

B

This

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This divine Principle being once thorowly awaken'd in us, we begin to form a different Judgment of things from what we had before ; Our Resolutions, and the very Inclinations of our Souls are changed ; which will naturally have its Effect in a thorow Alteration of the whole Course of our Lives.

If we may express this inward Principle, of which I am speaking, in one comprehensive Word, it must be that by which our Apostle frequently expresses it in this Epistle, namely *Faith*. He declares in the Prosecution of this Discourse, that *Abraham*, the great Patriarch of the Jewish Nation, *was justified by Faith*, and that *his Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness* ; and therefore he proposeth *Abraham* as the great Pattern to all who desired to be accepted of God, whether they were Jews or Gentiles.

As to the Nature of this Faith of *Abraham*, we have a clear Account of it in the sacred Writings. It was such a firm Belief in God, according to the Revelation which God had made of himself to him, as included in it the most profound Reverence of Soul towards that excellent Being ; an absolute Resignation of himself, and all that he had, to the Divine Will ; a ready Disposition of Mind to obey the most difficult Commands ; together with an entire Trust and Confidence in that God, whom he thus revered and obey'd ; a Faith, which, when God required it, made him cheerfully to forsake his Country and his Kindred, sojourning for many Years in a strange Land, nay, which made him undertake the difficult

Tas

*without Internal Religion.*

I I

Task of offering up his Son, his beloved Son *Isaac* ; in a word, which enabled him, as the Scripture expresseth it, *to walk before God, and to be perfect*, that is, upright in his Sight. Gen. xvii. 1.

And by just such a Faith as this, a Jew by Descent became a Jew inwardly ; and a Christian by Profession becomes a Christian inwardly ; and all pious and good Men, both before and since *Abraham*, have by means of such a Faith become acceptable to God, through the Mediation of our Great Redeemer. This is that great Principle so heartily recommended by the Writer to the *Hebrews*, and illustrated by so many eminent Examples, throughout one whole Chapter of that Epistle ; namely, a Believing and Hopeing in Almighty God, according to the Degree of Revelation which he hath made of himself to Men in the different Ages of the World, with a lively, strong, active, and vigorous Faith ; such as, being grounded upon worthy Apprehensions of God, and suitable Affections towards him, renews the Image of God in the Soul of Man ; and such as, whenever it is try'd, will be able to influence the Heart and Life of him who is endued with it. Hebr. xi.

I proceed to what I proposed in the *Second* Place, namely, To confirm the Truth of the Proposition which I laid down, shewing, *That this Inward Principle is that which is primarily acceptable to God ; insomuch that without it, all External Privileges and Professions avail nothing to this Purpose.*



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*Purpose.* Which will appear clearly evident, both from Scripture, and from the Reason of the Thing.

St. Paul not only asserts it peremptorily in my Text, but confirms it throughout the first part of this Epistle; in opposition to the Jews, who valued themselves so much, as being descended from *Abraham*, to whom and to whose Seed the Promises were made; and as being entred into Covenant with God by the Rite of Circumcision.

As to *Circumcision*, the Apostle tells them, that it was appointed to *Abraham* long before the Law of *Moses* was given, and that only  
 Rom. iv. 10, 11. as a Sign and Seal of the Righteousness of that Faith which he had whilst

he was uncircumcised: So that it was his Faith which render'd him acceptable to God, not his Circumcision. And as for their being descended from *Abraham*, he all along endeavours to make them sensible, that the true Seed of *Abraham*, chiefly intended in the Promise, were not they who were his Seed after the Flesh, but after the Spirit; those who were of the Faith of *Abraham*, and who walked in the Steps of that Faith, of whatsoever

Stock or Lineage they might be, *Abraham* being the common Father of all who should believe as he did; which was so plain, that the Apostle declares to them, in the latter Part of his Discourse on this Subject, That  
 Rom. ix. 30, 31, 32. God was about to cast off the natural

Seed of *Abraham*, the Jews, for their Unbelief, and to receive into Covenant those amongst the Gentiles who should embrace the Gospel; which accord-



rdingly came to pass in the Age of the Apo-  
 when the Temple of God at *Jerusalem* was  
 oyed by the *Romans*, all the Service of it  
 shed, and the Gentiles became the People of  
 in the Room of the Jews.

s to the Testimony of the Scriptures in this  
 at, I shall only farther cite three remarkable  
 ts of *St. Paul*, parallel one to the other, and  
 of them directly to the Purpose of my present  
 ument. In *Jesus Christ*, says he,

neither Circumcision availeth any Thing,

Galat. v. 6.

nor Uncircumcision; but Faith which worketh by

e. Again, In *Christ Jesus* neither

Galat. vi. 15.

circumcision availeth any Thing, nor

circumcision; but a new Creature.

And once

re, Circumcision is nothing, and

1 Cor. vii. 19.

circumcision is nothing; but the

doing the Commandments of God. Where it is

servable, That a new Creature, the Image of

and restored in the Soul of Man; and Faith which

works by Love, that divine Principle upon which

Love of God, and all other good Dispositions

Soul are grounded; and lastly, the keeping

Commandments of God, the Effect of both the

mer, are mention'd as the Qualifications abso-

lutely necessary both to Jew and Gentile, without

distinction, in order to Acceptance with God.

And from the Reason of the Thing, the Matter

is evident, as from Scripture it self, whether we

consider the Nature of God, or of Man. God is

pure and holy Spirit, and can take Pleasure in

no other Worship and Service than what is pure

and spiritual. Man is an understanding and rea-

sonable

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sonable Creature, made after the Image of God  
and is no other Ways capable of his Favour, than  
either by retaining or recovering the divine Image  
and an entire Resignation to the divine Will. The  
first Principle of a religious Life, is, as I have  
already observed, a stedfast Faith in God, which  
presupposeth right Conceptions of him, and will  
naturally produce a profound Devotion to him,  
even a Reverence and Love which will be the  
Foundation of a sincere and universal Obedience  
together with a perfect Trust and Confidence in  
him. And wheresoever this Principle is rooted  
in the Soul, as a Testimony of God's present Ac-  
ceptance, such a Soul will find Rest to its feelings,  
the Spirit of the Man being in that Frame and  
Temper which is truly natural to it, will feel true  
Satisfaction from it; and God himself will shew  
abroad a Sense of his Love, in a Mind thus dis-  
posed, by the same Spirit by which this Temper  
is produced.

The great Design of God in framing such Cre-  
tures as we are, was, That we might know, and  
love, and serve our Maker in this State of  
Trial, and become capable of enjoying him in the  
future State of Recompence: And forasmuch as  
we are fallen short of the Glory of God, he has  
appointed divers Means for our Recovery, affor-  
ding some Nations, and some particular Persons  
greater Plenty of these Means, more Advantage  
than to others, according to his good Pleasure,  
all which are still but Means to the End, and with-  
out no other Ways render us acceptable to God, than  
as we improve them to that Purpose. Which  
bring

leads me to the next Thing I proposed ;  
 namely,

Thirdly, To shew what is the real Benefit of any  
 Internal Advantages or Priviledges ; such as, for  
 instance, being born a Jew, or being circumcised,  
 any Thing which answers to these amongst Chri-  
 stians.

This is the Meaning of St. Paul's Question,  
 which he introduceth as an Objection made by the  
 Jews against his Discourse, in the Be-  
 ginning of the next Chapter, *What* Rom. iii. 1, 2.

*Advantage then hath the Jew ? Or*

*What Profit is there of Circumcision ? To which*

he immediately returns an Answer, which serves as

a satisfactory Account of the Matter before us ; *Much*

*every Way, says he, chiefly because unto them were*

*committed the Oracles of God. And again, in another*

*place, testifying the Grief of his Soul for the Reje-*

*ction of his Countrymen, the Jews, he thus enume-*

*rates their Privileges ; Who are Is-*

*raelites ; to whom pertaineth the Adop-* Rom. ix. 4, 5.

*tion, and the Glory, and the Covenants,*

*and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God,*

*and the Promises ; whose are the Fathers, and of*

*whom, as concerning the Flesh, Christ came, who is*

*ever all, God blessed for ever. Amen. The Sum of*

*which is, That God had taken them for his pecu-*

*liar People and Children, dwelling among them in*

*the Glory which resided in the Tabernacle, and*

*in the Temple, appointing his Service to be*

*there constantly perform'd ; making a Covenant*

*with them, and giving them visible Signs of*

that

that Covenant; adding special Promises, particularly that of the *Messiah* to be born among them, of the Seed of *Abraham* and *David* the famous Ancestors; and finally, giving them the sacred Word, the Scriptures of the Old Testament, those Divine Oracles, for their constant Direction and Guidance. These were great Privileges, and special Advantages; and those of Christians are yet much greater, for the awakening our Consideration, the informing our Judgment, the exciting our Consciences, the quickening our Hopes, and the establishing our Minds. A Jew in former Times had, and especially a Christian since the coming of our Saviour into the World, much the Advantage of the rest of Mankind to all these Purposes; for the Improvement of which, the Jews were, and we Christians now are accountable, as for so many proper Means and Helps for the forming of the Divine Image in us, for the begetting a true *Faith*, such as will work by *Love*, and be made perfect in good Works; and which, if we make use of them and improve them as we ought, will be effectual, through the Blessing of God, towards attaining the End for which they are design'd: As on the other hand, if we despise or neglect them, they will be only so many Articles of Impeachment against us at the last Day; and instead of rendring us more acceptable to God, they will expose us to an higher Degree of his Displeasure. But I hasten to what I propos'd in the last place, namely, To draw some Inferences from what hath been said, by way of Application.

First,



*First*, From the Doctrine I have been insisting on may be clearly deduced this plain and full Inference, That true Religion hath at all times, and in all Places, been one and the same; that pious and virtuous Men have in every Age, and in every Nation, been accepted of God upon the same Terms; I mean the inward Principle of a sincere Faith in God, and the Resignation of themselves to him, according to the various Discoveries they have had of his Will concerning them.

It is a certain and unchangeable Maxim, that which St. Peter pronounc'd in the Case of Cornelius, and which it seems he did not understand, he was convinc'd of it by a Vision which he himself had seen, and by the Apparition of an Angel to that devout and charitable Centurion. His Words are these; *Of a truth I receive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.* And as such a Person is, and always hath been accepted of God; so no other than such an one is capable of his Favour.

The Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian Religion, tho' differing in several External Circumstances, particularly in the degree of Revelation made by God to Men; yet all agree in this, that nothing hath render'd any Man acceptable to God under either of them, but only that inward Principle of which I have been speaking, which likewise renders all who are endued with it acceptable to him.

It is true, that those to whom God hath revealed more Particulars of his Will, are obliged to

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extend their Faith accordingly. He who was born before the giving of the Jewish Law, was bound to believe in God and to worship him, according to the Revelation which he had made of himself to the Children of Men by the Light of Nature, by the Works of Creation and Providence, and by the several Manifestations of himself to the Patriarchs successively, down from *Adam* to *Noah*, to *Abraham*, and to *Moses*. He who was born and bred under the Jewish Dispensation, was obliged to believe in God, and to worship him, according to the Revelation which he had made of himself by *Moses* and the Prophets. And he to whom the Gospel is revealed, is in like manner obliged to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to worship God according to his Institution and Precepts. The believing in God, the reverencing, loving, and resigning one's self to him, necessarily implies all this; for whosoever doth so, will readily embrace every Truth which God shall think fit to discover to him. But still, the great Principle upon which all, under these several Dispensations, have been accepted, is such a Faith in God, according to the respective Manifestations which he hath made of himself to Men, as will renew the Mind, influence and govern the Heart and Life, and bring Men to an Obedience and Subjection to the Will of God, as far as it is made known to them. God cannot contradict himself nor vary from himself; and therefore, although for wise Reasons he hath thought fit to reveal himself to the World, by degrees, at several dry times, and in diverse manners, yet the fundamental Principles of that Religion

Religion which hath been acceptable to him, have  
 been, and always will be, unalterably the same.

Secondly, We may therefore hence learn, who  
 are the Persons to whom we are obliged to extend  
 our Christian Charity, as to our Brethren in Christ  
 Jesus.

When St. Paul, in the Place parallel to my  
 Text, which I mention'd before, had declared,  
 that in *Christ Jesus neither Circumci-*  
*on availed any thing, nor Uncircum-* Galat. vi. 15,  
*on, but a new Creature,* namely, the 16.

Renovation of the Mind by that inward Principle  
 which my Text speaks of; he immediately adds,  
 and as many as walk according to this Rule, Peace  
 be to them, and Mercy, and upon the Israel of God.  
 Those then who walk according to this Rule, are  
 the true Israel of God. We cannot indeed other-  
 wise judge of the inward Dispositions and Tem-  
 pers of Men, than as they discover them in their  
 Conversations. If therefore we behold Men living  
 in sober, Righteous, and Godly Lives; if we know  
 them to be careful in the Observance of the great  
 moral Precepts of our holy Religion, and at the  
 same time serious and devout Worshippers of the  
 true God, through the Mediation of his Son Jesus  
 Christ; in a word, if their Tempers and their  
 Lives are truly Christian; though it should hap-  
 pen, that in some Instances of less Importance, in  
 matters not essential to Christianity, they should  
 their Judgments differ from us; since the *Peace*  
*Mercy of God in Jesus Christ* are extended to  
 them, we should, as far as lies in us, be at Peace  
 with them, exercising our Good-will and Charity  
 towards them, as our Fellow-Christians.

This truly Christian Temper, if once it could  
 prevail



20. *The Unprofitableness of External,*  
prevail in the Christian World, would by degrees  
restore the Church of Christ, which was designed  
to be one Body, to its Primitive Union and Inte-  
grity; and would soon put an end to those unhap-  
py Divisions and Contentions which have been too  
long a Scandal to the Reformed Churches them-  
selves, and have too frequently exposed them to  
the Designs and Contrivances of their subtil and  
restless Adversaries of the Church of Rome.

*Thirdly,* We are farther instructed from this  
Doctrine, to be exceedingly thankful to Al-  
mighty God, who hath afforded to us Christians  
greater Spiritual Privileges and Advantages, than  
to any others. He hath not left us to the mere  
Light of Nature and Reason, which how little  
it is improved in the Gentile World is too evident.  
He hath not left us to those Traditions whereby  
the Patriarchs were instructed; which, consid-  
ring the length of their Lives in the early Ages  
of the World, could transmit a much clearer and  
more certain Light, than Tradition in our Age  
could possibly do. We are not left to the imper-  
fect Revelation of *Moses*, which, compar'd with  
that of Christ, was but a Shadow, or as it were  
glimmering of Light: No, but we enjoy the Light  
of the glorious Gospel of our Saviour, even as *St. Paul*  
expresses it, the Light of the  
2 Cor. iv. 6. Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the  
Face of Jesus Christ, who came to re-  
cover the Will of God clearly and fully to us, and  
to afford us all the Instruction, Encouragement  
and Assistance which we can reasonably desire.

*Had the Israelites the Adoption?* It was but  
Children under Age: But we Ch-  
Gal. iv. 5.istians have the Adoption of Sons, grow



up to Maturity. Did *the Glory of God*, manifest-  
 ing it self in a bright Cloud, appertain to them?  
*The Word of God was made Flesh, and dwelt in*  
 his human Body, as in a *Tabernacle*  
*amongst us, full of Grace and Truth;* John i. 14.  
 and his *Glory appear'd as the Glory of*  
*the Only-begotten of the Father.* And though we  
 our selves did not behold him; yet we reasonably  
 believe in him, upon the sure Testimony of those who  
 were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty and Glory. Had  
 they *the Covenants*, one made with *Abraham*, and  
 the other by the Ministry of *Moses*? We have *the*  
*new Covenant*, made with the true *Seed of Abraham*,  
 by the Son of God himself appearing in human  
 Nature. Had they *the giving of the Law*? We,  
 of *the Gospel*. Had they *the Service of God*, ap-  
 pointed by the Law, a ritual, ceremonial, and there-  
 fore a burdensome Service? We have a more per-  
 fect, Spiritual Service, a Service more agreeable  
 and delightful to a reasonable Mind, appointed by  
 the Gospel. Had they *the Promises of a Messiah* to  
 come? We know that he is long since come, and  
 hath given us *great and precious Promises* to be fulfil-  
 led to all his Disciples, in part in this Life, but  
 more fully in the Life to come. Finally, Were *the*  
*Oracles of God committed to them*? To us Christians  
 much more; namely, not only those given out by  
*Moses* and the Prophets; but these with the Addi-  
 tion of the Words of our Lord, of his Evangelists  
 and Apostles. All which Considerations ought to  
 excite our Gratitude, to strengthen our Faith, to  
 confirm our Hope, and to quicken our Obedience.

*Fourthly*, It is farther a proper Instruction from  
 this Doctrine, that we take Care not to value or  
 boast of any of these Privileges, so as to rely  
 upon

## 22 *The Unprofitableness of External,*

upon them, without improving them to the Purpose for which they were designed. This were to fall directly into the same Error for which St. Paul in this Epistle rebukes the Jews. Yet so it is; many Christians also have exposed themselves to the like Reprehension.

Might not one argue with a great Number of professed Christians, as St. Paul here did with the Jews, only varying some few Words, on Account of their different Professions? *Behold! thou art called a Christian, and restest in the Profession of the Christian Faith; thou makest thy boast of God, and of Christ; thou knowest the Will of God, and approvest the Things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the Gospel, and art confident that thou art an Instructor and Teacher of others; which hast the Form of Knowledge, and of the Truth in the Religion of the Gospel: Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thy self? Thou that sayest,*

*Tic. ii. 11, 12.*

*that the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appeared to thee, teaching thee, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, thou shouldst live soberly, righteously, and godly; dost thou allow thy self in any Practice contrary to this plain and standing Rule of thy Religion? Thou that abhorrest Idols, and hast renounced all Idolatry as a Work of the Devil, dost thou live in the Neglect of the true God, and of his Son Jesus Christ? Dost thou forbear to worship and serve him, according to the Institution of his Son from Heaven? Thou that makest thy boast of the Gospel, by thy transgressing its Precepts dishonourest thou God, and thy Redeemer? The Consequence of all this must necessarily be, that whosoever enjoys the Privileges and Advantages which Christians have, and yet doth*

not

not attain to the Temper and Life of a Christian, at that Day, when every Man shall be judged according to his Works, with a due Respect had to the Advantages afforded him for his Direction and Assistance therein, instead of receiving the Remuneration of a Christian, he shall have his Portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers.

But then, on the other hand,

*Fifthly*, We ought to take in this Caution also, not to despise or neglect any of the Institutions of Religion, under the Pretence of their being External. This is the Error that some vain and conceited Enthusiasts have fallen into, imagining, that because true Religion is inward, *in the Heart and in the Spirit*; therefore those who have attain'd to what is Internal, are above the need or use of what is External. But these should consider, that Circumcision amongst the Jews, and the Feast of the Passover, were both of them External Institutions: yet in the Appointment of them God thought fit to annex that severe Threatning, that whosoever should voluntarily neglect either of them, should *be cut off from his People*. And in like manner Baptism and the Lord's Supper are External Rites to Christians; but such as are positively instituted by our Lord, and consequently to be observed faithfully by all his Disciples, under the censure of being accounted, if they wilfully neglect them, Despisers of their Saviour's Institutions. As, on the other hand, if we use them as we ought, they will become, not only *Signs* of something Internal and Spiritual; but also *Pledges* to assure us thereof; and even *Means* of attaining that Grace which

Gen. xvii. 14.  
Exod. xii. 15,  
19.



## 24 The Unprofitableness of External, &c.

which they are appointed to signify, through the Blessing of God attending the due Use of them.

*Lastly*, The principal Use of this Doctrine should be to excite us all to endeavour after that inward Principle, which will constitute us Christians in secret, as well as openly, that Circumcision, *which is of the Heart, in the Spirit, not in the Letter*. If we are *Christ's*, we must *crucify the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts*. If we have *learn'd Christ*; if so be we have heard *him, and have been taught by him, as the Truth is in Jesus*; we must *put off the old Man which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts; and be renewed in the Spirit of our Mind, putting on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness*; and being conform'd to the Likeness of him, who condescended to take our Nature upon him, that he might set us a Pattern for our Imitation.

It is true, the Assistance of the Divine Spirit is necessary to these great Purposes: But this is the peculiar Promise of the Gospel, that *God will give his Holy Spirit to them who sincerely and earnestly ask it of him*; and that he will never be wanting in the Aids of his Grace, to those who employ their own faithful and constant Endeavours.

May we all partake of that Divine Spirit, and thereby be perfectly form'd into the Temper and Spirit which manifested itself in our Blessed Redeemer, when he vouchsafed to appear upon Earth: that at his Second glorious Appearance he may own us as his Disciples; and that our Praise may then be found *not to be of Men, but of God*.